

Face of the Leper by PimpedOutGreenEars

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Summary: It might have been destroyed, but his fear never truly goes away. EddiexRichie. Oneshot.

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Author's Note: So I finished It a few days ago and I am obsessed. Talk about being punched in the face by friendship. This is kind of based on my thoughts of Eddie's fear, but I don't want to say too much. Also, I should mention that I imagine Eddie is older in this. I know in the book Richie moves away when he's 13 or so, but as I like to block out the canon sadness you can imagine Eddie as older than that. Anyway, I'd love some critique if you have any to spare!

Eddie's nightmares usually start off the same. He's in a creepy location, more often than not the house on 29 *Neibolt Street*, and the leper is chasing him.

Eddie always runs

(fairly quickly)

from the leper, but he can never run fast enough to put any real distance between them. The leper is always just there behind him, its breath on Eddie's neck, and its words coming out in a breath over his ear.

"I'll suck you for a Quarter!"

"I'll do it for a dime!"

"Come back here, kid! I'll blow you for free. Come back here!"

Sometimes Eddie is able to run until he wakes up. Until he wakes up with a cramp in his leg so bad that he almost tries to take care of it before grabbing his aspirator so he can breathe. That's on a good night.

But it's not a good night.

It's a bad night and Eddie's legs are so tired and his breath is so *thin*

and even though he knows it's a dream the fear is so overwhelming that he wishes he was dead.

He keeps running but his breathing is so strained that he knows he can't hold on much longer. He knows he'll have to stop. And then the leper will catch him. It'll touch him. It'll *infect* him.

He prays to wake up.

He doesn't wake up.

In the end he lets himself drop to his hands and knees and then the leper is there flipping him over, meanwhile Eddie has started to sob. Eddie tries to fight. He kicks out with his aching legs as his breathing becomes less and less, but the leper just holds him down.

For one brief and beautiful second Eddie is convinced he'll pass out even though he's had this dream often enough to know that's not how it ends.

No, a second later there's a hand in his pocket and then shortly after his aspirator is in his mouth and he's breathing in the medicine even though his brain is telling him he'd be better off to suffocate.

"There you go Eds, suck it in."

Eddie opens the eyes he didn't realize he'd closed and is met with the magnified blue eyes of Richie Tozier. At least it's almost Richie's face. Eddie knows within seconds the diseased looking skin of the leper will fade and he'll be left with the smooth skin of Richie Tozier, and as always that's somehow worse than the alternative would have been.

"Please go away, just go away!" Eddie cries even though he knows it won't happen.

This is what happens when the leper catches him. When he *lets* it catch him. It takes on the appearance of someone he knows. In the past it hasn't always been Richie. There were times when it was Bill Denbrough, causing Eddie more shame than he thought possible, and even Stan Uris. But as of late it had always been Richie Tozier, and Eddie feared that it might always be.

"Come on, Eds, ay say, ay say, just calm down now." The fake Richie has shed his leper skin and now just looks like the boy he and Bill sit with every day at lunch time.

"Don't call me that! Don't call me that! I hate *that*!" Eddie is screaming and once again trying to get up, but this Richie doesn't budge, just looks down at him from behind Coke bottle glasses.

"Aw, why? Don't like the way your heart starts beating like a drum in a rock song?" Richie asks. "Don't like how much you love it?"

Eddie finally lies still, his head thrown back as he cries towards the sky. He hates this the most. The part where the leper in disguise points out the things he tries so desperately to hide. The part where the leper makes him face what is and not what he pretends is.

"It's okay, Eddie, just let me take care of this and you'll feel all better. Scouts honor." Richie is pulling at the zipper of his pants and Eddie doesn't even bother to fight it.

"It's so dirty. I'll get sick. I'll get aids. God hates fags, and I'll go to hell." It's the simple stream of words Eddie says as Richie pulls down his pants and kisses his neck in a way that give him gooseflesh all over and even worse, an erection.

"That's okay, Eds. I'll still love you. Better than your mother ever can."

And then Richie is kissing him and Eddie feels like he falls into it. He's still crying, but Richie is wiping the tears away steadily with his hands as his tongue dances around Eddie's. It's horrible and it's wrong and Eddie is kissing him back.

When Richie pulls away Eddie looks to him desperately, wanting Richie back, wanting their mouths together again, wanting to forget how guilty and ashamed he is.

"Let me get you dirty, Eds." It's a request. One Eddie could deny and stop the whole thing.

But instead he nods and Richie's mouth is on him again, but this time on a lower region and Eddie is thrusting upward, crying out for

Richie as though he is the new God in his life. As though Richie's name is a new prayer and a new disease curing medicine and the only thing he'll ever need.

And when he comes it feels like a cleansing, like Eddie has shed an old life and adopted a new one. He's not delicate and soft, but dirty and bruised. He's not his mother's son, but a rebel on the run. He's sick but it doesn't matter. Hell, maybe he's already dead.

But it's okay now. Everything is okay now.

But then he looks down to see the leper's lips around him, the face of Richie now gone. And even though its mouth is open too much to grin, Eddie knows it is. The flaky skin of its face suddenly transfers to Eddie's skin and then it's running up his body, making his skin bleed in patches. He feels himself becoming sick and he knows he's dying and in the background he hears his mother's voice shouting,

"Look what you did Eddie! You've got aides! You're dying! Look what you did!"

And in the end it's only his own screaming that finally releases him from his dream world.

He pulls for his aspirator off of the night table and barely manages not to drop it. After he's taken two pumps he takes a minute to thank God that his mother didn't hear his screaming and come rushing to him. He doesn't know what he would have told her was wrong. He fears he might have told her the truth.

It takes nearly ten minutes before he can stop shaking and one look down at his soiled underwear makes his wheezing come back. He takes another hit before forcing himself up to go to the bathroom.

He runs himself a bath, knowing that even if his mother caught him she wouldn't care. Eddie could never be too clean, even if it meant baths at two in the morning.

He soaks himself as first and then he scrubs. Scrubs until his skin his red, still feeling the flaky skin of the leper on him. But he knows it doesn't matter how much he scrubs. He'll dream the dream again.

He'll let the leper catch him, and it'll take Richie's face, and this will happen all over again.

As he lets the water out of the tub and he sits inside it shivering, he thinks maybe God will still take him as long as he never acts on these urges. Thinks maybe as long as he doesn't ever let a man touch him like that in real life God will forgive him.

Then he thinks of Richie Tozier pinching his cheek and winking at him. Thinks of the way his heart speeds up when he calls him by that stupid nickname or calls him cute. And then he realizes his salvation rests on Richie Tozier never wanting to touch him.

And then Eddie laughs. Laughs until he cries. Because there's a part of him that can't decide which he'd rather do without, salvation or Richie Tozier.